



For Immediate Release  
Contact: Peter Roessmann  
Phone: (970) 945-8522, ext.36

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**River District Board Acts to Expand Grant Program,  
Passes Resolution Preserving Lake Powell Storage**

GLENWOOD SPRINGS, CO – The Board of Directors of the Colorado River Water Conservation District passed two significant actions at its fourth quarterly Board meeting: the first expands its Grant Program to fund larger water projects and a second measure resolves to conserve stored water in the Upper Colorado River Basin to better survive the current drought.

The Colorado River District Board expanded the scope of its Grant Program to include larger water development projects by creating a new fund of \$150,000 that will be awarded to one or more large-scale water projects in the form of challenge grants. The large project grant fund will operate concurrently with the present small project grant program for the next three years, and then the two will alternate years thereafter.

The recent drought brought to light the need for large water supply improvement projects in Western Colorado. These additional grant monies will be targeted for construction of new water storage, reservoir enlargement or dam rehabilitation projects within the Colorado River District's 15 West Slope counties.

The Colorado River District began a grant program in 1998 to assist small water projects in getting off the ground. The grant-funded projects develop new water supplies, improve existing supplies, improve instream water quality, promote water use efficiency, reduce sedimentation problems or control water-robbing invasive tamarisk plants. The program awards an annual total of up to \$150,000 in grants that are each capped at \$15,000 a piece. These grants have assisted many agricultural producers and small municipalities in funding much-needed improvements. So far over \$1million has been awarded to 107 projects.

Guidelines for the new grant program will be approved at the Board's January 2005 meeting. The large grant program will be open for business next February and intends to award grants by July of 2005. Solicitation of grant bids for the smaller grants of up to

\$15,000 will begin in November. Information on both programs will be posted on the District's website at [www.crwcd.gov/grantprogram.html](http://www.crwcd.gov/grantprogram.html) in the near future.

In other business, the Board unanimously passed a resolution urging the State of Colorado, as well as the other Upper Basin states of Wyoming, Utah and New Mexico, to "take whatever actions are necessary" to conserve storage in reservoirs on the upper half of the Colorado River and to release only the absolute minimum amount of water necessary from Lake Powell to meet obligations to downstream states. Record low water levels in reservoirs such as Lake Powell, Flaming Gorge Reservoir, Navajo Reservoir and Colorado's Aspinall Unit are a concern to Upper Basin states like Colorado and also pose a significant threat to loss of hydroelectric power generation capacity as reservoir levels recede.

Lake Powell, in particular, has suffered from the past five years of drought and is down to 38% of its useable capacity. The reservoir is instrumental in meeting the deliveries of water that the Colorado River Compact of 1922 requires the four Upper Basin states make at the Colorado River's dividing point of Lee Ferry, Arizona. As Lake Powell levels drop, its capacity to make the necessary deliveries to the downstream states of California, Nevada and Arizona diminishes while increasing the possibility of water use being restricted in Colorado and other Upper Basin states to meet future water deliveries if drought conditions persist.

The River District board reaffirms its historical position that the Upper Basin states do not have a requirement to deliver one-half of the United States' treaty obligation to provide Mexico with 1.5 million acre-feet of Colorado River water each year. The Department of Interior's guideline to annually release an extra .75 million acre-feet per year from the Upper Basin's stored water supply in Lake Powell is inequitable to the states of the Upper Basin. The Board further directed the staff to cooperate and work with the appropriate Upper Basin state officials to implement this motion.

The Colorado River Water Conservation District is a state-chartered agency designated to protect the water resources of the Colorado River Basin. The Colorado River District is comprised of 15 West Slope counties, including Mesa, Rio Blanco, Moffat, Routt, Grand, Eagle, Summit, Pitkin, Gunnison, Garfield, Ouray, Delta and portions of Montrose, Saguache and Hinsdale counties.

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